By
Sayyid Mujtaba Musawi Lari

KNOWING GOD

Translated by:
F. J. Goulding

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Author: Sayyed Mujtaba Musavi Lari
Translator: F. J. Goulding
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Sayyed Mojtaba Musavi Lari
Foundation of Islamic C.P.W
21 Entezam St., Qom, I.R.Iran
Tel: [0251] 6605408 – 6609550
Fax: [0251] 6602335
Website: www.musavilari.org
E-mail: info@musavilari.org

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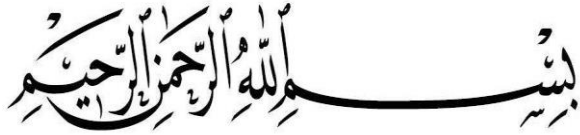

In the name of God,

the Compassionate, the Merciful

Chapter One

PERFECTING MAN'S FAITH AND CONVICTION

Perfecting Man's Faith and Conviction

Human beliefs, like man's knowledge, science and technology, advance with the centuries. Religion predates history, and has always engaged mankind's particular affection and attention. Language, writing, and means of livelihood have all progressed in parallel with man's mental and spiritual growth. They wax and wane, as is the human condition. Religions multiplied; deities proliferated. Some were represented as imaginary beings, some as animals, then some as humans; and so step by step ascended towards the metaphysical, the spiritual, and the transcendent, to the ultimate reality of the Unity.

Knowledge and religion had similar lowly origins. It is debatable whether man's road to spirituality was harder than his path to science and morality. Tangible entities are easier to accept than ideas; the seen world easier to grasp than the unseen. Aeons are required for minds to rise to the heights needed for knowledge of the Divine. The sun, the most obvious of objects, shines on all. Yet analysis of its composition and

conformation has been reached only after the creation and abandonment of innumerable hypotheses. Despite the sun's light, the truth behind the hypotheses remained in darkness. This darkness was not due to depravity or depression of thought. Science and knowledge were equally backward and had to go through the same eras of myth and superstition as the philosophies and beliefs of our forebears.

Myths and legends gave savage tribes their creeds and developed their morality. Slowly knowledge and experience attained a level capable of grasping the unity and orderliness of creation and the mathematical perfection of relations between natural phenomena. From these man deduced that all obeyed the will of a single unique Creator, One Totally Other, unlike any visible object. He deduced that every effect has its own separate cause, and posed an independent creation for each phenomenon. They went further. In early stages they imagined that such creations, or creators, had the form or appearance of animals. Speculations advanced through man to spirits and eventually to the One.

Research through all regions and eras shows that this progress is an expression of the essence of the nature of man as much as language, thought, and customs.

The faculty which distinguishes man from all other animals is his mind. A newborn infant manifests this power of mind. As its body grows, so do its mental muscles. They develop as observation, reflection, comparison, deduction, imagination, prognosis and cognition. Just as the physical must be tended and trained, so must the mind. And just as the physical community of the political and world state must be advanced by

united effort, so also must the intellectual ethical, philosophical, and scientific community-mind of mankind be advanced by mutual endeavour.

During the millennia of human existence, man has developed a store of ideas which had deepened, widened, and enhanced century by century. Finally this store became so enriched and supplied that faith and conviction were generated. This was a great advancement for man as each discovery in turn had been. It brought into being a new era in history, giving purpose to existence in pursuit of values not before recognised.

Despite science's admission, on the basis of historical research, that the religious sense is one of the oldest of human qualities, differing ideas are held as to its origins and how it arose. Some hold that humanity felt the sense of oppression at its weakness and impotence vis-à-vis the forces of nature and of living creatures, and so turned to religion.

But weakness cannot explain religion. The source of faith is not feebleness. The firmest believers are not feeble and frail. The saints and prophets who put humanity on the road to faith and assurance were people of greater resolve, will, force, and religious faith than anyone else. What power could have armed these noble personalities in their holy strife against rebellion, evil, and corruption? Could expectation of material gain or of political success strengthen them to endure the bitterness of tragedy, persecution, and opposition? Never!

So it is not the sense of weakness which gives strength to faith. The pioneers who led humanity onto the path of religion

could not have done so from a position of weakness, inferiority, and impotence.

The more man grasps the glory of the world and penetrates the secrets of the universe, the stronger grows his faith.

Religion is no malady. No healthier person can be found than the one who searches for reality, both about the world and within himself. Illness makes a man forget all other realities except his own pain and suffering.

Faith and conviction are too large a subject to be contained within the scope of one treatise. It is a vast domain. Exploration of it must range far and wide. Like the study of every quality in human nature, no single treatise can cover the entire sphere of their causes and effects.

The rich storehouse of the treasures of faith and conviction cannot be inventoried in any single treatise; no more than can any of the deepest movements in the human heart. No single definition can cover any one of them. For instance, 'love' is more than affection for another, 'attraction by beauty', 'altruism' or even a combination of all three. What treatise can probe the depths of the reality of what love is in its entirety? How much less, then, can it explain the universe of existence and the reality of its entirety?

The science and art of medicine progressed from superstition and magic into becoming a useful craft. Chemistry progressed from alchemy and fantasy to modern science. Inevitably, research starts with erroneous hypotheses, and by trial and error seeks and finds truth.

"Religions have been erroneous", many say. True, but that is not an adequate argument - despite its use by enemies of God - to disprove God's existence. The errors are merely mankind's stumbling steps in its search for truth.

Bertrand Russell says that religion is rooted in human fear; fear of the unknown, of death, of destruction, of mysteries.* He gives no reasoning to support his contention nor can he answer the question: "If fear was the only motive that prompted man to turn towards the Creator, does that prove that no Creator exists?" Even if it was in search of a refuge from fear that man discovered God, does that invalidate His reality? Would it invalidate the reality of any other truth that man should discover under the impulse of fear? If it was fear of lightning which drove man to discover the secrets of electricity, is electricity any less real for that?

It is true that faith in an omniscient, omnipotent Providence which is very apparent in time of trouble. That is one subject. Whether man's first impulse towards seeking some such refuge sprang from fear is a different subject. The two questions must be handled quite separately.

Seeking God is of the Essence

Man is born with a number of axiomatic assumptions. They are instinctive. No outside instruction gave rise to them, though later may have reinforced them. This is true of both educated and uneducated individuals. For example, the axiom, "the whole is greater than the part," requires no special instruction to make

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* *Why I Am Not a Christian*, p. 37.

that clear. Erudition, science, and philosophy are secondary results of the application of that and similar axioms. It is only when man forgets his axiomatic precognitions that he starts to doubt basic truths. Some philosophic schools deny the society of violated meanings. Faith in God is one of man's innate senses.This becomes plain if a person empties the mind of all religious or anti-religious prejudices and then opens his eyes to gaze upon the universe of creation. He finds himself at once contained within the sphere of beings in motion. He has started willy-nilly from a point he did not choose and is moving willy-nilly towards a destination he did not choose. Without his own consent or comprehension, he is part of a universal orderliness and procession of entities. Observation leads him to deduce from the manifold a connection between its orderliness and himself. He senses that behind the scenes of the world of being there reigns an invisible power which controls the course of all entities according to a will with order and accuracy. Himself, an infinitesimal particle in the vast manifold, possesses knowledge, power, and will. Hence he deduces that a knowledge, a power, and a will - though of a totally other dimension and wholly invisible - makes, preserves, and finally removes every living being without permission or agreement.

That this is an innate axiom of mind is confirmed by man's observation that there is nothing made without a maker, nothing done without a doer. Even the newborn infant, fresh from the womb, which has never before heard a sound or seen a movement, instinctively turns towards the source of a sound or movement. Likewise, practical living and experimental science assume that a cause exists for each observed effect.

The principle of causality admits of no exception. All the sciences - geology, physics, chemistry, economics, and the rest - observe phenomena to determine their causes, operative factors, interrelations, and interactions. Likewise mathematics, the most exact of the sciences, formulates theorems, adduces their proof, and draws their consequences as equations, interrelations, rules, differentials, and integrals. A scientist who arbitrarily replaces a plus with a minus in an equation, or inserts an intrusive number, confirms his own incompetence and ignorance. In fact, all human progress has been due to research uncovering causes of observed effects and adapting these natural laws for the use of man.

If we could find an instance in nature of spontaneous creation, we would then have the right to hypothesise the possibility of a similar phenomenon in other fields. But the law holds, which experimental science proves, that: "No matter or energy is ever annihilated; no new matter or energy ever emerges." We realise that in reality no autonomous entry contrary to the laws of nature is possible for any natural material or element. All our experiments, perceptions, and inferences reinforce the conclusion that there is no effect without a cause. It is therefore patent that anyone who holds otherwise is treading underfoot scientific laws, first principles, deductions of reason, and the ordinances of the Creator.

The human faculty of innate certainty about some axioms corresponds with instinct in the animal. Instinct, stripped of the limitations of its origin, is enabled to penetrate the barriers of sense and investigate the infinitesimal and the infinite, the unknown and the invisible. This limbic consciousness of axioms

is akin to the orderliness of nature, and averse to human divergences, so long as it remains free of meretricious fripperies propounded by self-opinionated "philosophers" and "scientists," or the pontifications of the pious. The acceptance of axioms must guide reason, and by throwing off every material consideration or motive, cleave to the truth, the absolute and the real. This innate insight is not the prerogative of any race or culture. It knows no boundaries. It recognises no East or West. There are such limbic laws in every human being: not implanted by systems or beliefs or education or social environment, but innate. One such is a mother's love for her child.

Yet cultural and environmental factors are among later influences which bend the innate consciousness of axiomatic truths, sometimes undermining sometimes undergirding them. Persons who remain firm in the mould they were made in, true to themselves, unhindered by local customs or bourgeois conventions, retain their innate knowledge uncoloured by popular catchwords or trendy fashions, can hear the inner voice more clearly and so can tell right from wrong in actions, truth from falsehood in beliefs. Therefore atheism, which derails true human nature, is less seen in such integrated personalities. If you say to such a person: "The universe is a mere chance agglomeration, an accidental conjuncture"; even back the assertion with eloquence, with seemingly logical arguments, with philosophy; none of this will move that person. The inner voice with its instinctive, innate, limbic certainties bids them to reject all such opinions. The "demon" which led Socrates was the name by which he called what Islam calls *fitrah*, that innate sense man is born with.

But so-called "science" weaves a spider's web of such human concepts which traps its captives into doubt and scepticism.

The arrogant delusions of limited knowledge place glass slides of many colours before the lens of the eye of reason and inner certainty. Those who boast of this type of human learning, paint the universe in the colours of their own spectacles of "science", "knowledge", "craft", and "skill". They then consider their portrait to be reality itself. They are unable to distinguish the lens of reason from the coloured glasses of wishful fantasy.

By this it is not intended to say that a person, by perfecting his intelligence, can stand so firm that he is immune to all deviatory influences. It is intended to say that a man should not be enslaved by limited human knowledge and delusions of technological prowess. He should rather regard every new piece of learning and science as a rung on the upward ladder of human endeavour. Setting his foot firmly on each new rung, he raises himself upward towards higher things, and sets himself free from the stagnant immobility of imprisonment within four walls of current phraseology and opinion.

In Persian, we use the Arabic word *fitrah*, for this inner compass or guide which is inborn in every individual. Bertrand Russell's contention that fear is the seedbed of religion, denies the fact that *fitrah* hurries to man's aid at moments of peril. But, of course, Bertrand Russell put the cart before the horse. It is not fear that generates religion; it is religion that runs to the aid of fear. When a person is under pressure from problems and difficulties; when all material factors fail; when every possibility in life has been exhausted; when the sea of troubles is so overwhelming that death is faced; *fitrah's* inner voice directs the

sufferer to a non-material refuge. Grasping onto the One, Whose supreme power is above all powers, the sinking person finds that Beneficent Being able to do exceedingly more than we ask or think. Taking the human's hand, He gives salvation from the mortal danger, the deadly peril. The experience encourages the person to turn with all his being, with heart and soul, to this same Providence in every time of need or of thanksgiving.

Yes, indeed, it is the consciousness of the perils of being alone in the world that kindles the inner light of a person and awakens awareness, leading to faith in the Lord.

The inner light radiates a sense of power and might in its hermit-cell in the human heart. Even materialists; indifferent in their days of glory, prominence, and domination; and blind to the boundless power of God, once faced with difficulty, defeat, and disaster: straightway return to the Deity they had denied while they dwelt in the tents of wickedness and strayed from the right path. In their trouble, with heart and soul, they seek the origin of all being, the source of all power.

So atheism and polytheism, in all their forms, from raw idolatry and crude animism to materialist progressivism, all result from disregard of *fitrah*. It is in these areas that the light of divine guidance, the whisper of direction, is required to lend strength and enlightenment to *fitrah* and to reason, to preserve them from error and to rescue them from stagnation in the haunts of fear.

The call of the prophets accompanies this inner restlessness which is *fitrah's* yearning for God. The first persons who heeded the prophets' call were people of enlightened heart and of a

living *fitrah*. In opposition to the prophets were persons inflated by their own conceits, by their boasted knowledge and vaunted intelligence, reliant on their own wealth or position. As one scientist said, "In ethics also, the law of supply and demand exists." If the demand for religion was not an integral part of the inmost being of humans, the supply offered by the prophets would go unsought. We observe that the prophets' supply does not remain unpatronised by customers. In fact it enjoys the custom of innumerable adherents. This is evidence that desire for faith is of the essence of humanity. Furthermore, under the prophets' teachings is subsumed the worship of the One. Their world did not return unto them void.

Idolatry; worship of the sun, moon, and stars, or of other images; though primitive, crude, and undeveloped forms of man's upward aspirations, are also evidence in their own distorted fashion of the heart's need for a deity, something to be worshipped. These early stages were like the early stages of science when it dealt in magical hypotheses; untested and untried fruits of the imagination; yet nonetheless, steps on the ladder up to the One Who is the Essence of Being, the Origin of All Being. They were mirages, allowed by God, to draw the heart towards the cooling streams of the refreshing Grace of the One, the totally Other. However, erroneous and external, they appealed to man's inmost being wherein dwelt the innate restlessness that only finds rest in pure monotheism.

In the past century - the 14th of the Muslim era, which ends in 1979 AD - religious experience has been a subject of scrutiny for the learned. Discoveries have been made which, because of their importance, are still subjunctive, debatable points for research

and discussion, for weighing and sifting. Yet they put valuable and profitable results within our grasp. Studies of comparative religions, of the history of religion, aided by sociology, archaeology, palaeontology, anthropology, psychology and the like, pour the religious instinct and feeling into a new crucible in which it is separated into its different components so that its elements can be analysed.

Freud was the pioneer of the exploration into the human conscious, subconscious, and other elements of mental and emotional performance.

Adler and Jung followed. They penetrated into the inner depths of the human mental and emotional make-up. They investigated a whole new world. In it they found capabilities, types of perception, insight, cognition, motivation, occult fantasy (some shaped by folk-inheritance), choice, and decision-making. These all seemed primary, innate, and limbic. Among such faculties, not secondarily developed by reason, they placed the religious sense. They opened it up as a domain for further scientific investigation, seeking the key to its enigma.

These new scientific advances have convinced the savants of every school that the religious sense is of the essence of humanity; innate, limbic, primal, and basic. Without it, the human is not human. It is not exchangeable with any other element. It is of the quiddity of natural conviction and intellectual insight. Its source lies in the depths of the spirit. It makes the person aware of himself. It informs him of his own existence.

Among other innate senses in the same category are:

(1) **TRUTH:** The impulse to seek for hidden treasure, for accuracy and righteousness; the sense which has led the thoughts of man since the day of his first appearance on earth to study and research into the myriad problems of the unknown and the obscure. It is this which has brought science and industry into being.The difficulties and hardships which obstructed the path of scientific researchers, inventors, and discoverers in penetrating the veil of obscurity that cloaks the hidden secrets of the world, were only faced because this instinct urged them on to successful conquest of uncharted territories of knowledge.

(2) **GOODNESS:** The sense of goodness is the abode of virtues, duties, divine revelation, righteousness, justice, and philanthropy. This innate instinct impels man to desire a pure disposition. It repels and abhors impurity.

(3) **BEAUTY:** The sense of beauty inspires taste, appreciation, art and embellishment.

To these three we must add:

(4) **THE RELIGIOUS SENSE:** The instinct for the luminous, the holy, something to be worshipped; shares the basis and independence of the other three.

The concept of God answers human needs of every type. Some of these needs are those of reason; some are not.

Reason seeks God by the road of orderliness and thought.

Instinct (the religious sense) seeks God by the road of love. It looks for a relationship with Him.

Proof of God's existence, like that which was offered by the philosophical systems of Descartes and St. Thomas Aquinas,

appeal to man's reason. Modern science and philosophy will accept as proof only those capable of being tested by experiment.

Mystics, like Pascal, respond to the religious sense along the channels of the innate impulses and the inner witnesses. Pascal writes: "Of God's existence, man's heart has proofs his brain wots not of."[†]

Will Durant: "Religion is a natural matter, born directly of our instinctive needs and feelings."

Dr. Alexis Carrel wrote: "The mystic sense is the stirring deep within us of a basic instinct. Man, just as he needs water, so likewise needs God."

In the 1920's, Dr. Rudolf Otto affirmed that the elements of reason are paralleled by the elements of *fitrah*. The two, he said, are partners mutually assisting each other. All the attributes of God (like Omnipotence, Holiness, and Sovereignty) must be understood as separate entities. Thus "Holiness" is an independent concept. It is not the result of any other idea. It is not to be reckoned the same as any other concept of the human being, whether a concept of reason, or of instinct.

We live in what we call "the Space Age". We have added the fourth dimension of outer space to the three terrestrial dimensions of length, breadth, and depth. So also this age adds to the three basic concepts of "Truth, Goodness, and Beauty"; "Holiness", the fourth dimension of the human soul. It is possible that this fourth dimension is the foundation of the other

[†] *Rise of Wisdom in Europe*, v.2, p. 18

three. The fact that in every age a minority has propagated materialistic ideas in no way invalidates the claim of the religious sense as limbic. Materialist atheism is a speciality of a small, though vocal minority. They are an exception to the rule incarnated in the vast majority of mankind. Metaphysical views are natural. And there are exceptions to every rule.

In history the first sceptical school of thought arose near the end of the 7th century BC. Its protagonists were Thales (622-560 BC); Heraclitus (530-470 BC), and his near contemporary, Democritus. One of the most renowned of them all was Epicurus in the middle of the 4th century BC.

Yet even these thinkers cannot be ascribed with totally materialist views. In his History of Philosophy, a learned scientist writes that Thales held that material changes are the result of spiritual impulse; that Democritus was no materialist but convinced of the existence of spirit.

It was in the 17th century after Christ that materialism began to make progress among thinkers. Even so, there are contradictory verdicts. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for instance, is by some writers called a materialist and by others a God-fearing man. It is true that he criticised the Church. Perhaps it is because of that that his adversaries accused him of "materialism".

The Egyptian writer, Farid Wajdi, in his book, *Da'iratu'l-Ma'arif,* writes that Rousseau said:

"As I observe events which show natural forces at work, and scrutinise the way in which one cause influences another, one result reacts with transforming power upon another, it grows increasingly clear to me that the Prime Cause must be beneficent

and benevolent. I have become convinced that His Will set existence in motion, and raised life out of dead things. You ask me where He is. I reply, 'In the firmament which He set revolving, in the stars which shed their light on us, in me, in that lamb grazing, that bird flying, that stone lying on the ground, that tree's leaf blown hither and thither by the wind - everywhere in everything.' (Do these ideas not spring from reason? Whence the orderliness we observe? Blind chance? An accidental agglomeration? Let others do as they will. For myself, I cannot observe this sovereign orderliness without inferring that a Supreme Wisdom ordained it. How could dead matter produce life? How could blind accident create these smoothly-functioning, co-ordinated phenomena? How could a brainless wonder create what is intelligent and intelligible?)"

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Chapter Two

GOD AND THE REASONING OF THE EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCES

God and the Reasoning of the Experimental Science

Modern man tends to take refuge in the reasoning of the experimental sciences without stopping to consider its limits and boundaries. This attitude of mind is one of the most misleading and most destructive when God is brought into consideration. The more the human mind works on a particular subject and the stronger it grows in the mastery of that subject, the more it tends to neglect other subjects and drop them from its purview. Thus men tend to regard divine matters as secondary, and outside the scope of the researches of science.The tendency is to use the same spectacles to look at every type of phenomenon, however diverse. Since the specialists of the experimental sciences devote the entire force of their thought to their own particular subject, all other interests remain foreign to them. It is this lack of acquaintance with and distance from the intangible which prevents them from conceiving anything beyond the natural world where they can

make tests and experiments, always with material elements. Their tools are the weights and measures of materials. So they accept only those forms of human knowledge which admit of quantification. The sciences, devoted to describing and explaining factual occurrences, research into the relations within the phenomenal world from the infinitely large to the infinitesimal. But the relation between God and that world is outside their range. Measures of the physical cannot be asked to yield information about the metaphysical. God cannot be put on a microscopic slide for laboratory observation! The Creator of the material universe, of the space-time continuum, transcends matter, space, and time. Measures of the tangible He cannot be reduced to.

We know that a relation exists between the taking of a certain drug and an alteration of metabolism or of health. Ask a doctor how the drug works and he'll answer in terms suited to your degree of knowledge, rather than in obscure technical terms. To say "God is the answer" to a particular medical problem is not a scientific answer, but a layman's. Medical problems require medical answers. Each science must use its own technical terms in its own universe of discourse. Divinity has its own universe of discourse and its own terminology. Specialists confine themselves to one science. The independence of such sectional scientific studies from the more all-embracing study of the idea of God has left in the subconscious of many a scepticism about the Divine because they do not recognise that their work has deliberately confined itself to a small portion of reality, and to that alone.

Further, all experimental sciences lead to material results, which can be put to work for daily life. These seem real and immediate to the people who use them. Those people therefore are hesitant and sceptical about larger ideas whose relevance to day-to-day details is not so immediately obvious. Each science has set up an impregnable confining wall round its territory. Its effectiveness within those walls naturally increases our confidence and reliance on its work. Our world-outlook tends to take colour from the attitudes of mind which the sciences have injected into our consciousness and unconsciousness, to their own advantage, and so to the diminution of other influences. Unless a man is possessed of a firm and stable faith he remains a stranger to the ways of those who know God. His scepticism grows. He regards as acceptable whatever in life coincides with scientific thought and reading. He discounts anything that his sciences do not prove – or even try to prove – for him. The basis of religious thinking is thus left untilled and untended. He considers undeserving of attention any problem which cannot be taken in isolation from all religion, be judged by its outward appearance, and proved by experiment. Having grown used to scientific language, with its formulae and equations, he regards religious matters as lightweight and commonplace.

The error is great. Science may start by expressing its observations in abstruse and complicated formulae. But once they are translated into life, they too become simple and commonplace.

Medical science may employ meticulous care in examining an involved case, and put to work much technical knowledge

expressed in abstruse terms. But when it comes to telling the sick person what is wrong and what has to be done, it must be made simple enough. "Take this medicine. Avoid X in your diet. Rest a lot for several days." The knowledgeable doctor does not explain to the patient the fundamental formulae or of drugs that affect it. He only states the bare essentials of the treatment.

Again, anyone nowadays can use the telephone or radio. They have become parts of everyday life. The rules for getting the best out of them are explained to the user in simple, ordinary, everyday language. All the abstruse terminology of technicalities is omitted. The proper place for that sort of language is in the scientific and industrial centres which invent and construct the instruments, or in the books and libraries dedicated to the matter.

It is therefore unjust and illogical for science to regard religious affirmations as simple and outside their sphere merely because they are not expressed in abstruse or scientific terminology. It is in fact the glory of religion that its principles and precepts can be expressed in simple everyday words to be understood by the people.

Further, if the precepts and principles of religion were within the scope of human research, proof, and taste, there would be no need for apostles or prophets. We could have constructed it ourselves, just as scientist and manufacturer together construct a machine.

Man has, in no age so far, been able to claim that he has researched into and mastered all the secrets of this earth, or knows all that there is to know. Man is still evolving. He must

frequently correct his errors. And he has still much ignorance to turn into knowledge.

Now let us examine the boundaries of scientific domain, and what problems the sciences have a right to express opinions about. Has the range of their activities, and the realm of their researches, become fixed within definite limits?

The subject that the experimental sciences must study is the material world – material phenomena alone. The scientific tools, and their measures for attaining their goals, consist of OBSERVATION, HYPOTHESIS. EXPERIMENT with CONTROL and PROOF. They work on the world and its objects, from the largest to the infinitesimal. Hence they are judged to be objective and impersonal. If their findings accord with the external world, they are accepted. If not, they are rejected. Testing proves the conformity of a finding with the world around it.

Which scientific research has the right to penetrate the realm of faith and belief? At what point do the experimental sciences make contact with God?

In fact, the experimental sciences have nothing to do with a person's faith or lack of faith. Since the sphere of the natural sciences is natural phenomena, they cannot express an opinion about God, whether negative or positive. All religious schools, at least of the People of the Book, teach us that God is not bodily substance. The five senses cannot perceive Him. He is not contained in the space-time continuum.

His essence is all-sufficient and self-sufficient. He has no need of anything outside Himself. Read all the books of the

experimental scientists; you will not find that experiment can test God or any of His attributes. For God is not a phenomenon of nature. No experiment can be set up to test a hypothesis about Him. If an experimental scientist utters all kinds of denials about God on the basis of his research, he has moved out of line even of the rules of his own science. He shows himself ignorant of the subjects and sphere of his occupation. The sciences have not even an A-B-C of the knowledge of God. So it is utterly illogical for a person who has sunk himself in the ocean of the experimental sciences to start denying God.

George Lister in his book, *Introduction to Philosophical Principles,* writes: "To imagine something which occupies neither space nor time and is immune to alteration or change is impossible."

Such a statement obviously reflects a mentality pivoted on nature and the tangible. Such a mind is bound to regard anything outside its sphere of action as impossible. The most an honest natural scientist can say is: "The metaphysical is outside my universe of discourse. So I keep silent about it. I neither affirm nor deny it." He dare not commit himself to anything beyond that. A person who confines himself to that realm in the world of being which permits tangible experiments may not deny that there can be realities outside his sphere of work. If he does make such a denial, he must recognise that it is merely an expression of his own choice, not the fruit of research, test, and proof by scientific experiment.

For God-fearers, the sort of god a natural scientist might want – that is, one who establishes his existence and identity in terms of natural causes and effects – is no God at all.

Acceptance of Unseen Existence Involves Other Realities Besides God

The One God, Whom prophets and saints have led us to know, is absolute, imperceptible, eternal, transcendent, and omnipresent yet in no single place. He is imperceptible not only to the eyes but to all the sense-organs.

The human mind naturally finds the concept of a Being beyond all sense, matter, material expression, scientific test, or ordinary observation, not easy to entertain. People tend to lightly discard what they find to be difficult to conceive.

Atheists and humanists ask: "If God exists, why doesn't He show Himself?"

The Sciences, when they cannot get at a truth or express a fact in the formulae and measures proper to their realm; cannot deny its existence or prove its non-existence, at least until a test is devised which will demonstrate its impossibility and unfeasibility; they must pro tempore put it in their "awaiting solution" tray.

Do all the things which we accept, of whose existence we are convinced, owe our acknowledgement to our own existence or acquaintance or perception of them? Is it a proof of God's non-existence that He cannot be sensed physically and His qualities cannot be discerned corporeally? All materialists know that a great many of the teachings we hold firmly, derive their compulsion from judgement and facts that are neither perceptible by sense nor familiar. On the stage of being, there are innumerable invisible objects. Advances of modern science

and knowledge have discovered myriads of such facts from infinite distances to infinitesimal hadrons and quarks.

One problem which is preoccupying scientists today is the change of mass into energy and vice versa. All visible bodies transfer energy to each other with a change in their own appearance, like the burning of wood. There is a transfer of energy. But this energy, which is the pivot for the vast majority of actions and consequences in the orderliness of the universe - how are we to assess it by sight or by touch?

Electricity plays an enormous part in all the constructions of science, culture, and ordinary living. But has any physicist - or anyone else for that matter - in experiments or in daily work with electrical appliances ever seen electricity itself? Has he felt or perceived by any other sense the weight, the texture, or construction of electricity? It is the lighting of a lamp or the observed effect of some other test which tells us that electricity works.

Until the work of Isaac Newton no one knew anything about the mutual attraction of bodies which Newton expressed in his equations of gravitation. Gravitation cannot be seen, makes no sound, cannot be felt, tasted, or smelt. But since Newton, the laws of gravity have been part of the basic concepts with which science calculates. All our new industries make use of it. Yet Newton himself never saw the force which he quantified so ably. It was observing the fortuitous fall of an apple from a tree that drew his attention to it.

Physicists make great use of spectroscopy. They reckon the colours of the spectrum as ranging from red at the bottom to

violet at the top. But they also acknowledge that innumerable colours exist both below red and above violet, all imperceptible to us. Colour varies with wave-length, they tell us. And the wave-lengths are waves of light. The sun's light, or light from any other source, is composed of the combination of all the colours in a single ray, and 'white' in particular is the impression that the mix generally makes upon our optics. When these rays strike an object, that object absorbs a proportion of the rays and reflects back the rest. It is the reflected rays we see and by them we observe the object.

Moreover, colours change and differ in proportion to the size of its wavelength and frequency. If the wavelength is between 620–750 nanometers (one billionth of a metre, 10^{-9} metre) and frequency range is 400–484 THz (one trillion Hertz, 10^{12} Hertz), the light moves into the red band; at 380–450 nanometres and frequency of 668–789 THz it is in the violet band; while there are uncountable hues, shades, and saturations of colour and tint both above and below these values which are beyond human perception.

The air which surrounds us has an extraordinary weight of its own. Its pressure on our bodies is a steady 16,000 kilograms. Because the pressures outside and inside the body are equal, we fell no discomfort. Before the days of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Bliaise Pascal (1623-1662) this scientific fact was unknown. Nor could it ever have been recognised from the sense. Certain observed phenomena, like the variation in air pressure at different altitudes, drove thinkers to devise a hypothesis of the

weight of air and then to devise experiments to test and prove it.*

Even the natural qualities which scientists deduce on the basis of experiments which the senses can grasp, and the inferences ratiocination draws therefrom, cannot be directly perceived. Radiowaves are in movement in all directions, everywhere, all the time, yet not seen. No place is free of the forces of gravitational attraction, yet the force is not material nor can particles of it be found for measurement.

The task and triumph of science is the study of the effects of invisible forces and the formulation of their inner laws of being and operation.

Geology traces the formation of the strata in the earth's crust. With absolute certainty they inform us of the order of their formation over millions of years; and from their clines and anti-clines, their folds and outcroppings; tell us how the oceans came

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* Our 4th Imam 'Ali ibn Husayn Zayn al-Abidin as-Sajjad in the 55th Litany of Vol. 2 of his works (Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya) nonetheless adumbrated the concept in the antiphons of the section:

"Holy and Transcendent art Thou, our Creator and Preserver:
Thou knowest the weight of heaven.
"Holy and Transcendent art Thou, our Creator and Preserver:
Thou knowest the weight of the worlds.
"Holy and Transcendent art Thou, our Creator and Preserver:
Thou knowest the weight of the sun and the moon.
"Holy and Transcendent art Thou, our Creator and Preserver:
Thou knowest the weight of darkness and light.
"Holy and Transcendent art Thou, our Creator and Preserver:
Thou knowest the weights of air and of shadow."

into being, how they spread, how the mountain chains were formed, how the continental plates have moved into their present positions. Yet no person now alive was there to witness any of these events about which they so confidently instruct us. And we believe them, without ourselves having seen any of it.

Metaphysical concepts like beauty or love, hate and enmity, and knowledge possess a form of existence which cannot be perceived nor its nature determined nor its limits fixed. Yet we nonetheless recognise them as realities. A man is conscious of knowing, and of what he knows, and of his perceptions of truths which cannot be felt by the senses. Man is also conscious of himself within his person, though no other human can observe that self. It is only observation of actions which enables us to deduce that a personal will inspires them.

Does the intangibility of these factors and the inscrutability of their qualities necessarily involve a denial of their existence? Atheists imagine that the existence of God must involve His occupying bodily space and time. They think that unless He possesses a set of limbs like themselves, His existence cannot be accepted. But these are the concepts of idolaters who set up temples with images. Since the eye of their mind and their reason is blind, they conclude that if a god exists, that deity must enjoy the same sort of existence as themselves, always within visual range.Further, since they feel that the most certain and accurate of their perceptions are those of the senses, they limit themselves to these, forgetting that problems of science and philosophy cannot be solved solely upon perception by the senses. Such a concept can only be misleading. Sense-perceptions alone cannot encompass the whole range of realities

and of facts as they are made clear to us. The very eye which is our means of achieving certainty about some realities, is quite incapable of displaying other realities. Books of psychology have revealed a great deal to us on the subject of errors of sense-perception and have drawn our attention to a varied series of errors which the eye makes. They show us, in a kaleidoscope, moving pictures with waves of beauty and many changes, none of which has any independent reality but is due to the inbuilt errors of sight. Similarly, cinematographic films would not present a continuous picture to us were it not that the eye fails to distinguish the innumerable separate frames from each other, but sees them as one continuous picture in movement.

The fallibility of the tactile sense is easily proved by a simple experiment: Take 3 large pitchers. Fill the first with near-boiling water. Fill the second with room-temperature water. Fill the third with near-freezing water.

Plunge one hand into the hot and the other into the very cold water. Hold them there for a time. Take both hands out together and plunge both simultaneously into the second vessel of room-temperature water.

To your amazement, you experience two contradictory feelings at one and the same time. The hand taken out of the hot water informs your brain that the room-temperature water is cold. The hand taken out of the cold water informs you that the second vessel contains water all of one temperature – and that average – neither very hot nor very cold.

Logic, too, belies the information your hands give your brain. The water in one vessel can only have one temperature. The

verdict of your hands is conditioned by their previous situation. Your mind contradicts them and says otherwise.

Thus mind must exercise control in assessing verdicts of the senses. What other guidelines are there?

Thus the five senses have no realistic and objective value, however great their practical use may be. People who rely solely on the senses for their information will never succeed in solving the problems of existence or the mystery of creation. Camille Flammarion in the book, *Secrets of Death,* writes:

"Mankind passes its life in ignorance and unknowing, not realising that the human physical make-up cannot lead a person to realities or that the five senses mislead him at every point. The only instruments which can lead man to realities are reason, thought, and precision."

Modern science and reasoning gives us certain proof that there exists such matter as molecules and atoms and forces which are invisible and imperceptible to any of the five senses. This affirmation opens the universe around us to the possibility that much else exists which is beyond our senses. We cannot deny existence of things we have not felt. For failure of the senses to perceive their existence is no scientific proof that they are not there. Our outward senses do not have the power to perceive everything which exists; indeed, they sometimes deceive us and show us the opposite of what is true. We must not imagine that all the truth of existence is restricted to what our senses can perceive. Indeed we must asseverate the opposite and acknowledge the possibility that matter exists which we can never sense. Just as, before the discovery of bacteria, no one ever

imagined that millions upon millions exist within and around our bodies, or that everyone's life is the scene of battles between bacteria.

We therefore conclude that our outward sense does not have the power to display the reality and the truth of existence to us, and that it is reason and thought alone which can acquaint us accurately with the precise truth of the make-up of the universe we live in.

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Chapter Three

FACTORS IN THE SPREAD OF MATERIALISM

Factors in the Spread of Materialism

It is our contention that there is no call to study man's religious tendency. We hold that man has by nature a propensity for religion. Human nature, in the aspects of mind and spirit, has an innate attraction towards reverence for God and the Oneness.

Materialism, on the other hand, is in contradiction to the innate tendency of human nature. Instead of wasting time and effort asking: "How did man develop a religious sense?", science should investigate how anyone ever came to develop a materialist tendency.

Materialists claim that their beliefs stem directly from the scientific and philosophical advances of the 18th and 19th centuries after Christ. They forget that every epoch from remotest antiquity has thrown up materialist views; in all classes, literate and illiterate, cultured and savage, wise and

foolish. Today, in what boasts itself to be "the scientific age", some in all strata of society, learned and ordinary, hold metaphysical ideas, and are convinced of the existence of God. Were the materialist claims correct; we should find the more learned the more atheist. The facts are otherwise. Some of the greatest savants are the most godly of persons.

"Science has come! God is dead!" they cried. Simplistic! Unscientific! A baseless affirmation! It contains the half-truth that in our age unknown secrets of nature and facts about the universe have been brought to light. It also contains the false premise: "Faith in God was spawned by the marriage of ignorance with fear of the unknown."

In fact we find today that it is the enlightened men of faith who welcome the discoveries of facts about nature and increase their faith thereby. Wonder at the works of the Creator produces worship. The more you know of the complexities of creation and its functioning, the more profound your reverence for the Creator. Awareness of the marvels of the chain of causality increases your awe of the Prime Cause.

It was only yesterday that man expanded horizon of observation and measurement beyond himself. Hitherto mankind had no notion of the complexity of the works of creation around him. Today new discoveries follow one right after another; e. g. that 10 million milliard (10^{15}) cellules compose each physical human body. These discoveries reveal creation's splendour to a degree unimagined by any former age.

Must not the recognition of these causes, factors, events, and phenomena of nature lead inevitably to recognition of the Prime

Cause whose Word started off the chain reaction of continuous creation?

Where is the logic in claiming that the belief in God is confined to persons unaware of the processes of creation? Should the scientist, who is aware of the natural causes and of the factors determining each step of creation towards perfection, of mankind's evolution, of the minute accuracy and exactitude that rules every change in the nature that surrounds us, come to believe that these wondrous laws and amazing interactions have somehow fortuitously emerged out of mindless matter? Have his discoveries and insights merely brought him to a stage of thought which sees only blind concomitance and chance conjunctures in the exactly interacting phenomena?

Close study shows that the rise of materialism in Europe was due to certain historical facts. Among these must be counted mistakes made by the Church authorities.

(1) At the start of the Renaissance, Church authorities showed undue severity against partisans of the "new learning". This was because, alongside its purely religious doctrines, the Church had inherited from the philosophers of earlier ages, both Hellenic and non-Hellenic, various views about the world, and judged it as heretical to question these views as to deny religious tenets. But "new learning" exposed the falsity of previously held cosmogonic theories. Scientists who had discovered the facts, and expressed them in formulae which the Church declared heretical, in disgust turned against the Church, and discarded not merely the secondary views but also the Faith itself. To curb this mounting revolt the Church pressed harder. A desire for revenge rose in the hearts of the excommunicated. This illogical

passion, seeking not to establish objective truth but simply to avenge, led the learned to "throw out the baby with the bathwater"; not merely the institutions which claimed to stand for God, but God as well. To seek revenge on a group of people with ecclesiastical claims is one thing. To revolt against religion in the true sense of the word is quite another. This dichotomy they failed to grasp. Yet it is obvious that revenge is not a rational or scientific reaction. Emotion has no place in intellectual pursuits.

(2) The Church used anthropological and materialist images in describing God, and employed them to teach children both in homes and in institutions. But as they grew up, young people realised in the course of study that such images were inept, unscientific, and false. Sadly, the Western Churches' misleading teachings thus used caused youth to deviate towards materialism. They failed to grasp that rational, truly objective concepts concerning the question of the existence of God could be found. Thus the Church gravely erred in its anthropological approach, to its own to humanity's grievous loss.

Walter Oscar Lundberg, physiologist and biochemist in America, writes: "There are numerous reasons why scientists are sceptical about God, and in particular (1) politics intervenes or sociology or nationalist considerations, by which the State or some institution claims priority over all loyalties. And (2) human thought in every generation is bound in the trammels of preconceptions, both spiritual and physical, so that thought is never truly free, at a person's own choice, but to some extent conditioned by circumstances and environment and the spirit of the age. And (3) the Church's use of anthropological and

materialist concepts in the education of children quoted the text: 'God made man in His own image.' But as they grow up, these young people reject the thought of a man-like God as illogical, and unscientific. Unable to reconcile their childhood beliefs with the scientific method, they end up by abandoning the idea of God altogether. Instead of rethinking what they mean by the term in the light of their scientific researches, and raising it on to a rational plane in line with their higher learning, they merely discard their earlier teachings altogether.'"*

A fourth factor might be named as the call to asceticism and to a celibate life. In human nature are certain God-implanted instincts. They are not for nothing. Their aim is inherent in creation. Man must not allow himself to be their blind slave. But nor must he close his eyes to their existence, in denial. No natural instinct may be wholly ignored. Nor is there any justification for enjoining continence on everyone. Man's duty is to acknowledge, to steer, and to govern his instincts in balanced and equable exercise.To condemn the natural instincts in the name of religion and God, to sanctify monkery and celibacy, to decry wedlock, when the survival of human kind depends on the founding of families; to call all sex dirty and irreligious, to sanctify poverty and indigence, and to proclaim that man should seek the happiness of soul and spirit in the next world while abjuring this, is to make a tragic error and to fall into the most serious of heresies. Religion's task is to acknowledge the instincts; to improve, to steer, and to govern them; not to deny or obliterate them. Man's nature is such that the spiritual and

* *The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*, p.60. A collection of articles by 40 of the world's leading scientists, edited by John Clover Monsma.

the physical instincts must be kept in perfect balance. Both are essential to human nature. They must not fight each other for pre-eminence. By equable synthesis they must make life on earth a natural, logical, happy, and harmonious existence. There is no dichotomy between happiness in this world and happiness in the next. The Christian preachers who declared that man must choose between worldly joys and heavenly bliss erred gravely and promoted the revolt which followed their teachings.

Justifiably, many rose in revolt against doctrines which they said promised them "pie in the sky by-and-by", while urging them to allow themselves to be exploited and treated as things for the advancement of the class which was very far from abjuring earthly joys for the sake of heavenly bliss. The false doctrine which denied the instincts promoted materialism and bankrupted religion. But what is the truth? It is that which some call joys – gambling, drunkenness, fornication and the like – lead to earthly misery and darkness. Religions frowns on such excesses for that very reason that they destroy earthly happiness. They make here miserable not only for those who do them, but those around them as well. It is a lie to say that men must choose between happiness here and happiness hereafter. Eternal life begins here. It is a quality of living which contains the natural joys of earth and the natural joys of heaven.

Islam's Shari'ah has five ethical categories of human actions. The first and highest of these is "obligatory". This means duties which all must perform. Among these are, naturally enough, "worship" and "good deeds" and "seemly conduct". These are obligatory in their own right. Their object is not the production

of happiness here on earth. But there is happiness here on earth. This is the fruit they bear. They are done for themselves and for God's sake because they are highest expression of human nature as God made it. They are not done for the sake of the enjoyment of the good fruits they bear. Worship educates and edifies the human being. It acts as a cleansing force that washes away corruption and filth and enhances man's true humanity. This is why there is no conflict between questions of morals and questions of practical living. For ethical principles are guidelines for successful living.

It may be that these illogical teachings and misleading doctrines led thinkers like Bertrand Russell to be against God. Considering godliness to be a cause of happiness, Russell writes: "Church doctrines place man between two norms of unhappiness, one of which he is bound to bear. Either he deliberately renounces what this world might give him in favour of joys to come, or he must abjure the joys of the hereafter to wallow in this world's Lucullan groves."

Russell has it all wrong. True religion does not teach that man is condemned to bear one or other of two alternative norms of unhappiness. God's grace and power is limitless. The treasury of His bounty is inexhaustible. He wishes all His servants to enjoy both this world and the next to the full.

Permissiveness and unbridled indulgence also lead to materialism, which is also their origin. It is the idea which determines conduct. The idea of godliness uplifts man's spirit into a realm of purity and growth, clear air and healthy living.

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This booklet, *Knowing God*, has been translated into Chinese, English, Malay, Norwegian, Polish, Russian and Spanish.

SAYYID MUJTABA MUSAWI LARI: Author of *Western Civilization Through Muslim Eyes*, and *Resurrection Judgement and the Hereafter*, among others, he was born in 1935 in Lar. He completed his studies in Qum and continues to write extensively on all aspects of Islamic ideology, culture and civilization. His books have been translated into Arabic, Bengali, English, French, German, Hausa, Japanese, Kurdish, Malay, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Thai and Urdu.

مركز نشر الثقافة الإسلامية في العالم

Sayyed Mojtaba Musavi Lari
Foundation of Islamic C.P.W
21 Entezam St., Qom, I.R.Iran
Tel: [0251] 6605408 – 6609550
Fax: [0251] 6602335
Website: www.musavilari.org
E-mail: info@musavilari.org